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Note:

Some text and illustrations are lost through tight binding. This is a problem which we regret we have found unavoidable since we are only filming at the Victoria and Albert Museum those catalogues that cannot be found in other London locations.

General

78. N.

ARP

JEAN ARP

March 2 – 27, 1954

CURT VALENTIN GALLERY

32 EAST 57 STREET · NEW YORK

ON CONTEMPORARY ART

"Though I acknowledge myself an admirer of the ancients, yet I am very far from despising, as some affect to do, the genius of the moderns: nor can I suppose that nature in these later ages is so worn out as to be incapable of any valuable production."

PLINY, THE YOUNGER
(62-114 A.D.)

Jean Arp at Meudon, 1953
(*photo Ernst Scheidegger*)

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

JEAN ARP *was born at Strassburg in 1887. 1904 to Paris, 1909 to Switzerland, since 1926 at Meudon near Paris. His first one man show in the United States was held in the Curt Valentin Gallery in January 1949.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the following for loans: Mr. and Mrs. William A. M. Burden, New York; Dr. and Mrs. Israel Rosen, Baltimore; Mr. G. David Thompson, Pittsburgh.

LIBRARY
E. III,
23. III. 1954.

The media of painting and sculpture have remained unchanged since the time of Pythagoras. But while the Pythagoreans assumed that the antitheses of the direct and the indirect were the substance of Matter, we, in the years when the great transformation from representational art into expressive art occurred, wanted to stress the spiritual rather than the material. So we restricted ourselves to vertical and horizontal surfaces. In expressing the innermost, the beyond, the vertical and the horizontal are the ultimate at man's disposal.

The lustrous gleam of mythical poetry inspired us, poetry in which joy and sorrow are miraculously revealed. It was the "untroubled reaches," as Tauler[1] called it, that we yearned for.

We yearned for the swan-white tide, the divine affinity which unobtrusively permeates the differences of matter, of conditions, of events. Basically, we yearned for the absolute, for the "consistency of nature and spirit, of object and subject," where the contradictions cancel each other out, or as Eckhart[2] wrote: "As long as I am this or that or have this or that, then I am not all things and do not have all things. Withdraw, so that you neither are nor have this or that. Then you will be universal. And once you are neither this nor that, then you are all things."

Shepherd of the Clouds
(University of Carracas, Venezuela)

Deception in art is frequently called reality. When the paint-

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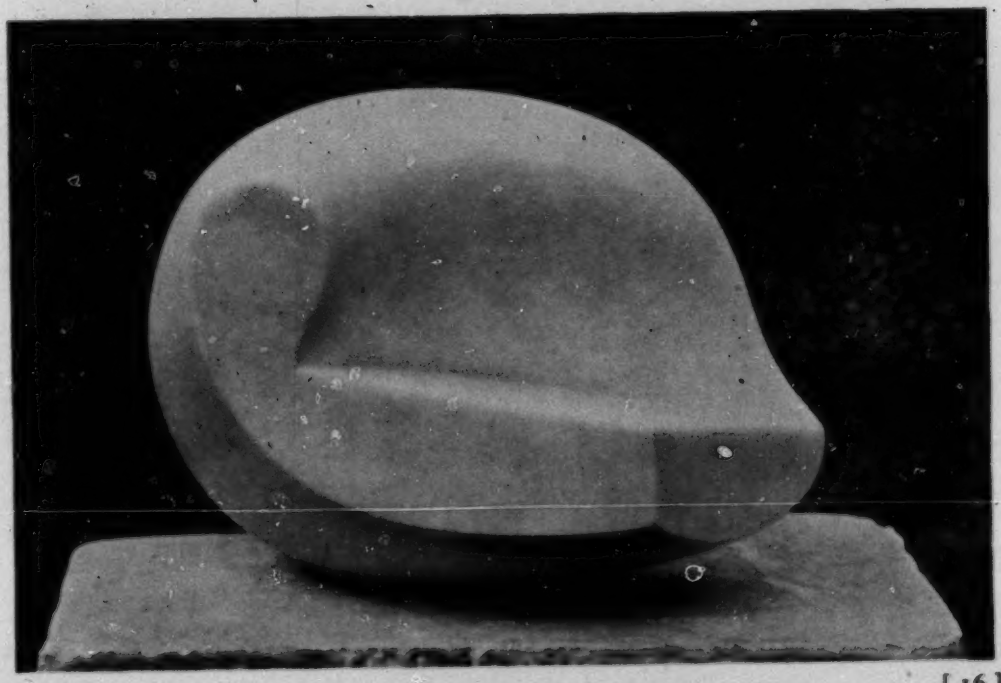


[16]

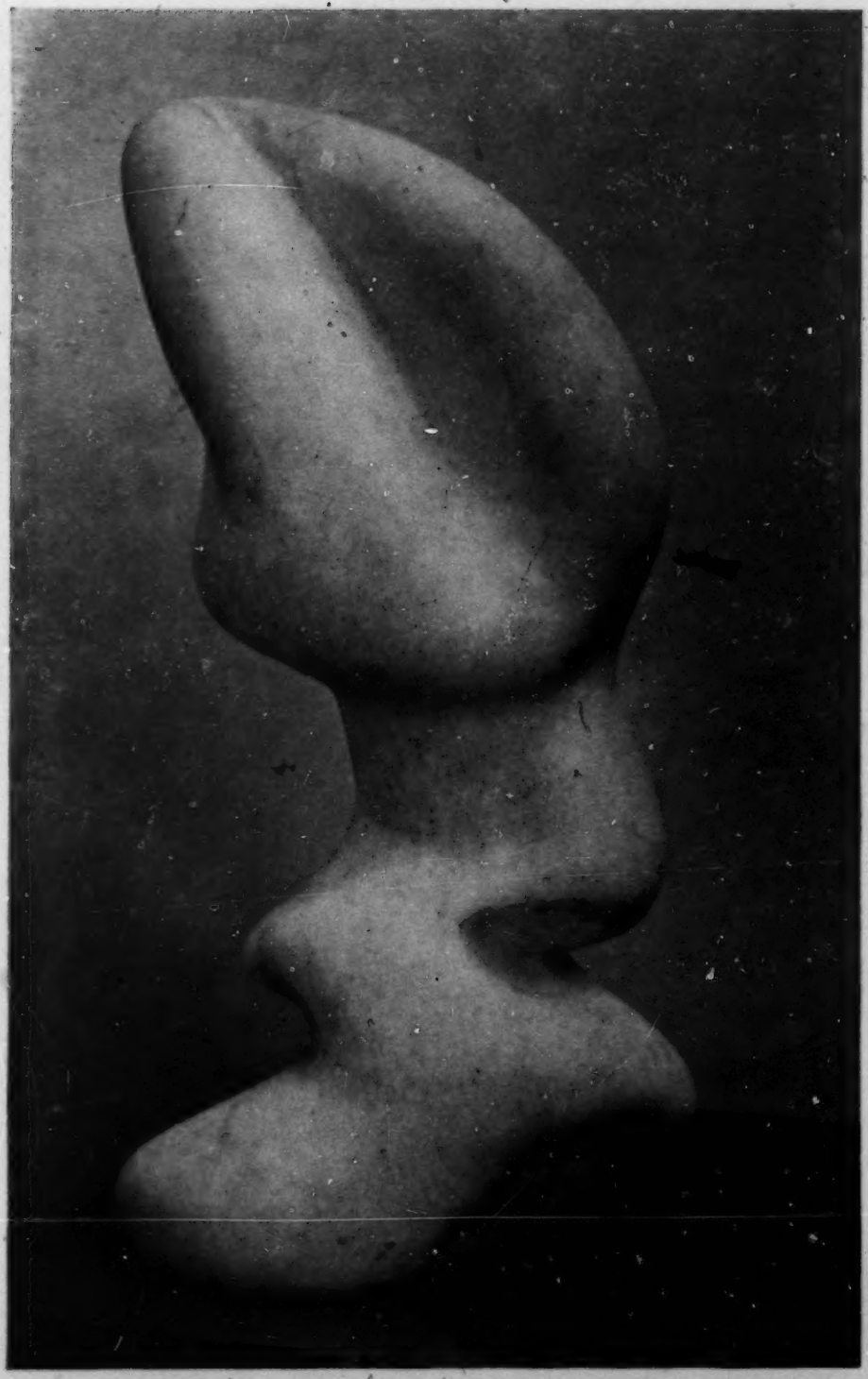
ing of an apple is almost deceptively pictorial, it will be called "realistic." The stage-magician is honest enough to call his magic "illusion." How many painters and sculptors from the Realist period asserted that their works were "reality." And these very same ones who shunned illusion and what seemed to them too facile were branded as "decorative" by the partisans of parrot-art.

"What is that?" "What does that mean?" are questions that gallery-goers have often asked of painters and sculptors, either abstract or concrete. Most of these viewers, however, have been content to accept our work. Many of them indeed began to like it. Could it be that gallery visitors have become wiser than the artists? Artists constantly ask themselves "What is that?" "What does that mean?", just as they also ask themselves: "What is man?" "What does man mean?" Creative artists cannot be orthodox believers, who are never at a loss for an answer. Inside them there is the quickening of their mothers' movements, of Goethe's verses:

"... Formation, transformation,
Eternal Mind's eternal conversation,
Wreathed with all floating forms of what may be..."

This should be the most fundamental thesis of the artist and his art.

How many sketches, collages, drawings, poems and variations of poems, plastic works,



[9]

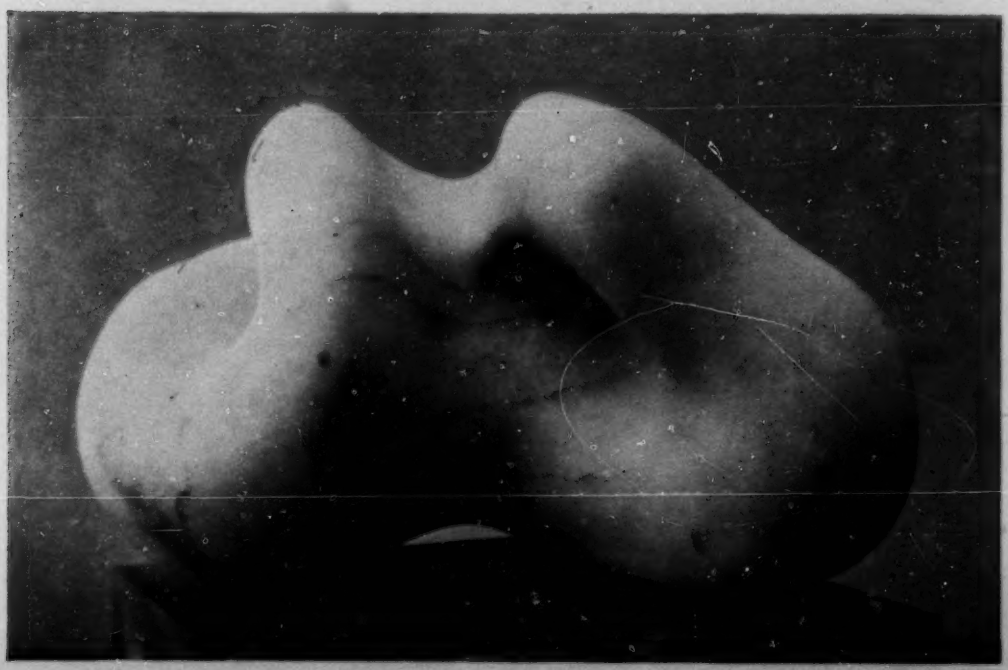
and once-begun pages and projects have disappeared, gotten lost, been destroyed by myself. In a man's life, there is a great part of his work which does not comprise absolutely all the elements of what he considers to be his personal style. However, these are often the most valuable because they approach the essential of art more purely and enduringly than his highly personalized work. I am thinking of Cézanne's unfinished works.

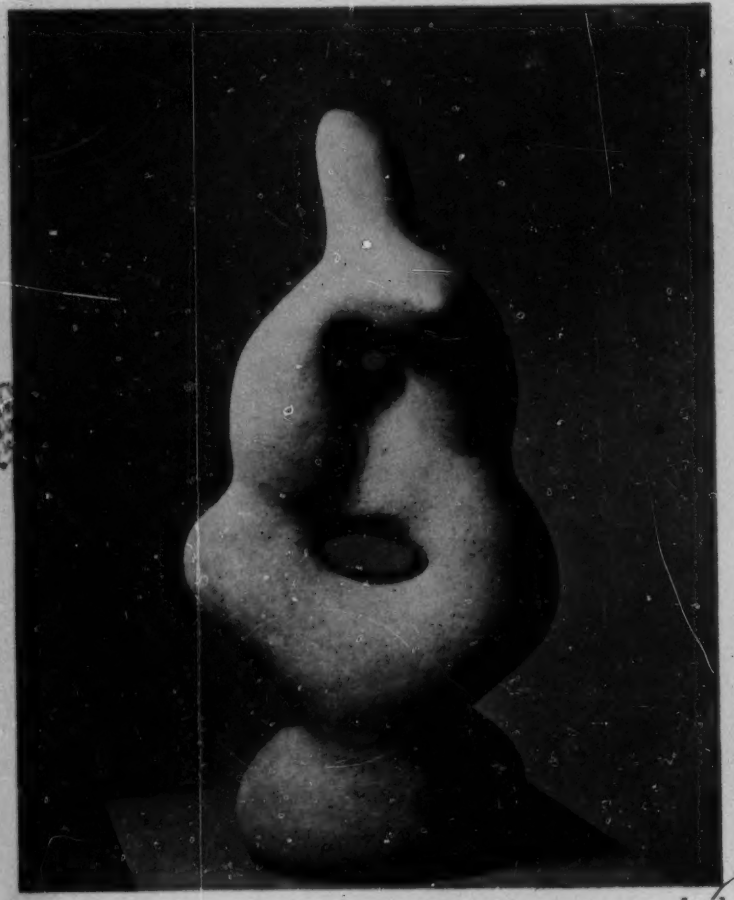
I prefer to think of the artist's work as dreams rather than work. Love also is more likely to be called dream than work.

JEAN ARP

Written in 1954
Translated by *William Crumley*

1 Johannes Tauler, Dominican mystic, 1290-1361.
2 Master Eckhart, Dominican mystic, 1260-1327.





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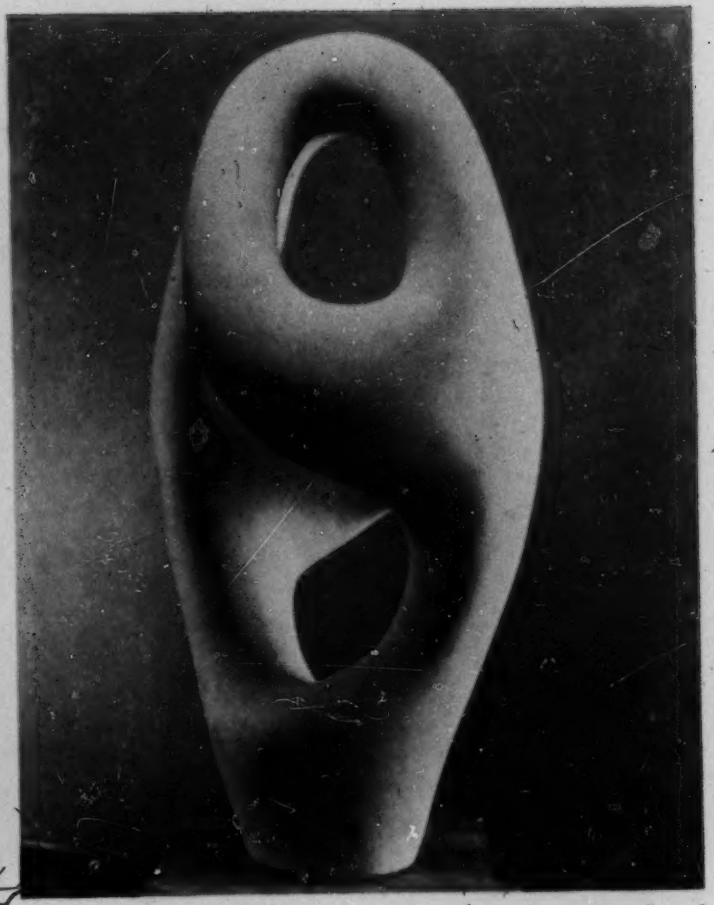

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NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA LIBRARY

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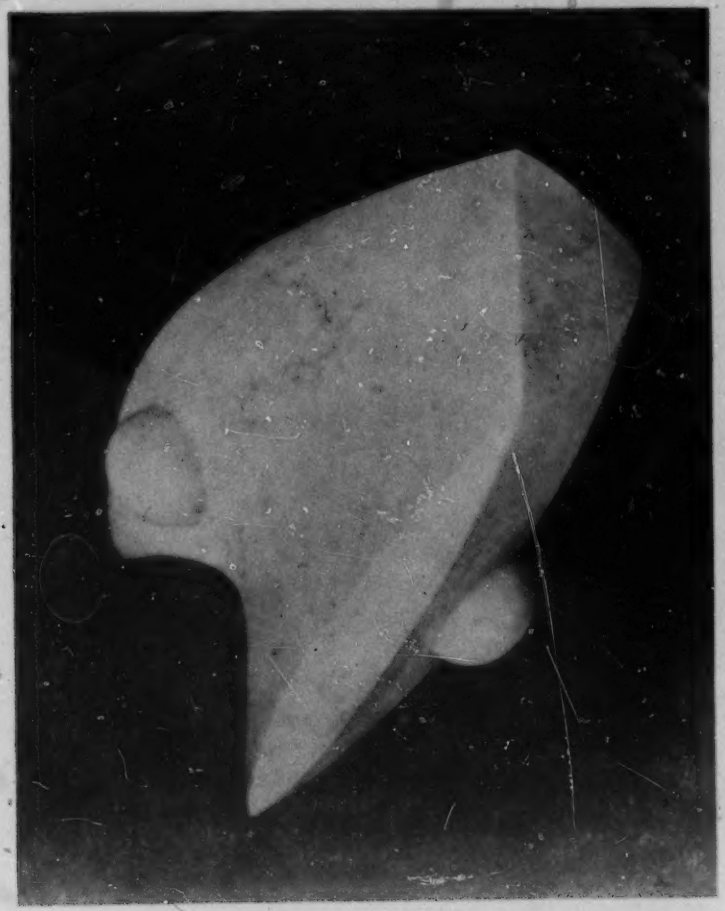

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[13]

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CATALOGUE

1 **DREAM OF AN OWL**
Songe d'Hibou
1938. Stainless Steel. H. 15½"

2 **SIREN**
La Sirène
1942. Bronze. H. 17½"
Lent by G. David Thompson

3 **SILENT**
Silencieux
1942. Marble. H. 20"
Lent by Dr. and Mrs. Israel Rosen

4 **MYTHICAL SCULPTURE**
Sculpture mythique
1949. Stone. H. 25¼"
Lent by G. David Thompson

5 **FROM THE REALM OF ELVES**
Du pays des lutins
1949. Bronze. H. 9¾"

6 **BUST OF AN ELF**
Buste de lutin
1949. Bronze. H. 12¼"

7 **HEAD ON CLAWS**
Tête sur griffes
1949. Bronze. H. 18¼"

8 **CONFIGURATION IN SERPENTINE MOVEMENTS**
Configuration aux mouvements de serpent
1950. Marble. 9 x 14"

9 **PISTIL**
1950. Stone. H. 34"

10 **CYPRIOT SCULPTURE**
Sculpture cyprienne
1951 (begun 1930).
Marble. H. 16½"

11 **THALES OF MILETUS**
Thales de Milet
1951. Granite. H. 42"
Lent by G. David Thompson

12 **HURLOU**
1951. Granite. H. 19½"

13 **COBRA-CENTAUR**
Cobra-Centaure
1952. Bronze.

14 **EXTREMITY OF A MYTHICAL WINESKIN**
Outrance d'une outre mythique
1952. Stone. H. 17"

[3]

[6]

15 AQUATIC
Aquatique
1953. Marble. H. 13" L. 25"

16 OROU
1953. Marble. H. 8¼"

17 PTOLEMY
Ptolémé
1953. Stone. H. 40"
Lent by Mr. and Mrs. William A. M. Burden

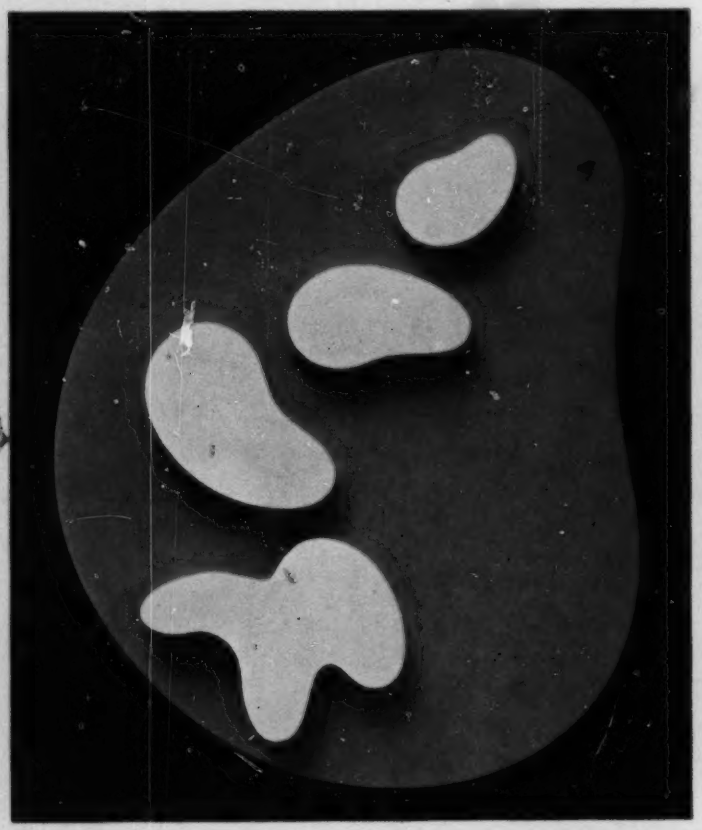
18 TORSO
Torse
1953 (begun 1930). Marble. H. 36"

RELIEFS

19 INTERREGNUM
Interrègne
1949. Carton-Cardboard. 28 x 20¾"
Lent by G. David Thompson

20 SYMBOL OF METAMORPHOSIS AND FUTURE OF THE BODY
Symbole de la metamorphose et du devenir de corps
1951. (begun 1916). Wood.
28¾ x 24"

21 FLOWERY HEAD
Tête fleurie
1953. Wood. 20½ x 18"



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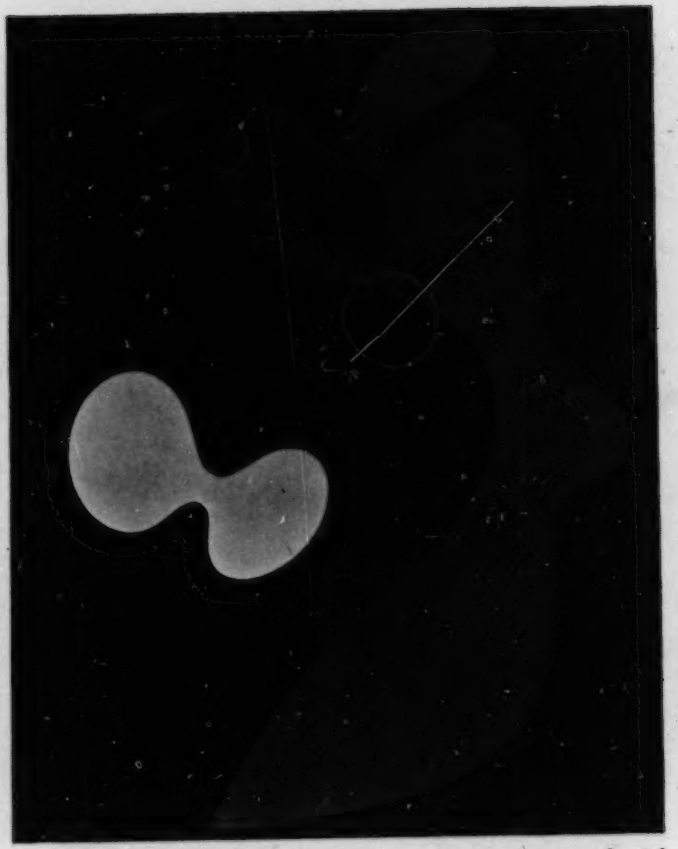

[26]

22 CONFIGURATION
1953. Wood. 25¼ x 23"

23 CONFIGURATION
1953. Wood. 25¾ x 24½"

COLLAGES

24 CONSTELLATION
1954. Collage. 13¾ x 11"

25 TEAPOT WITH NAVEL, OBJECT OF A DOMESTIC LIFE
Théière au nombril, objet d'une vie casanière
1954. Collage. 13¾ x 11"

26 BIRD AND NECKTIE
Oiseau et cravate
1954. Collage. 13¾ x 11"

27 BLACK ON BLACK
Noir sur noir
1954. Collage. 13¾ x 11"

28 PROFILES AND FACES
Profiles et faces
1954. Collage. 13¾ x 11"

29 HEAD
Tête
1954. Collage. 13¾ x 11"

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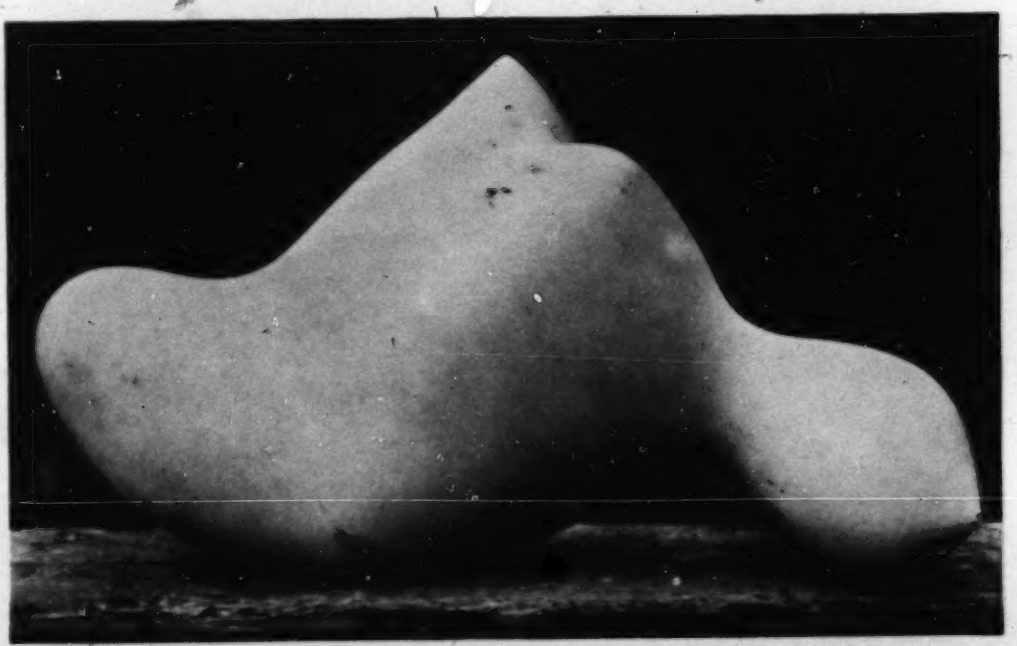
30 BEFORE BEING MUSIC
Avant être musique
1953. Color woodcut. 26 x 20"



DREAMS AND PROJECTS

BY JEAN ARP

Text and 28 Original-Woodcuts

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